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New York, 28 June-22 July 2010
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Sisters of Charity Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34325 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

The Millennium Development Goals: water, sanitation and women

Mobilizing and increasing the effective use of financial resources and achieving the national and international economic conditions needed to fulfil internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, to eliminate poverty, improve social conditions and raise living standards, and protect our environment, will be our first step to ensuring that the twenty-first century becomes the century of development for all (Monterrey Consensus, 2002).

The blatant shortfall in crucial action steps towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals remains a troubling concern for many non-governmental organizations and members of civil society. Current statistics indicate that approximately 1 billion people lack safe and/or adequate drinking water and some 2.6 billion are without adequate sanitation. This is not to negate the progress that has been made where safe drinking water and sanitation have been provided and maintained since global community awareness and concern led to Government initiatives in some countries, along with partnerships garnering cooperation, funding, and knowledge from non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, business and industry, the private sector, and educational and technical institutions. According to figures gathered from 1990 to 2006 and released by the United Nations Children's Fund in November 2009, 1.6 billion people have access to improved drinking water.

Development of water and sanitation systems in rural and urban areas would alleviate poverty, contribute to overall food security, assure health benefits for the general population (eradication of diarrhoea diseases), free the girl child for attendance in school, and women for more sustainable activity (education, jobs, community involvement towards protection and management of the water/sanitation system, etc.), and assist in achieving environmental sustainability.

We urge greater effort on the part of all stakeholders to provide adequate, safe drinking water and sanitation to meet the target of halving the number of those living in extreme poverty by 2015. A non-governmental organizations major group discussion paper on water, sanitation and human settlements indicated that it had been well established that women were vital links in the sustainability chain. Additionally, it had been proved time and time again that any activity at the local level that did not involve and empower women was a non-starter and bound to fail. No issue in sustainable development was more relevant to women than water and sanitation.

Women need to be partners in the water-sanitation projects from the very beginning. These projects must be adapted to local situations and must include a total water and sanitation management system. Beneficiaries need to be involved at all levels, beginning with construction. Tools to learn how to use, maintain, repair and keep the system safe must be provided. Education, especially hygiene education and behaviour modification will be essential to assure the effectiveness and success of the system. Such systems will accommodate the needs of the community and of individual families.

Funding for water/sanitation/management system projects could be garnered from any one of several financing for development sources. However, at this time we are recommending that Governments consider initiating new funding sources for international development revenues, such as the financial transaction tax.

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Statement submitted by Society of Catholic Social Scientists, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34337 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

By establishing Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals, world leaders agreed that reducing maternal mortality was essential to fulfilling their "collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level". Policy regarding Goal 5 should be based upon the latest and best data available.

A new study shows that United Nations agencies have been overestimating maternal mortality rates and pursuing policies based upon unreliable, unsubstantiated data. *The Lancet* reports that maternal deaths worldwide in 2008 totalled 342,900 rather than the 536,000 figure used by the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in recent years.

A study by researchers at the University of Washington, which was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, finds that the numbers from WHO and UNICEF were faulty owing to a lack of proper reporting and imprecise statistical modelling. But the study by *The Lancet* also finds that progress has been made in preventing pregnant women from dying.

The study cites four main reasons for the improvement: declining pregnancy rates in some countries, higher per capita income, higher education rates for women and increasing availability of basic medical care, including "skilled birth attendants".

The report finds that HIV/AIDS caused 60,000 maternal deaths and suggests that maternal deaths would have been significantly lower in Africa if mothers had been given antiretroviral drugs. This sharply contradicts current United Nations plans to divert funding from HIV/AIDS to family planning as a way to reduce maternal deaths.

The study shows that 50 per cent of maternal deaths come from just six countries, namely India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Researchers were surprised that three of the richest countries in the world, the United States of America, Canada and Norway, actually showed increased maternal mortality. These same three countries have the most liberal abortion laws in the world.

What was not cited anywhere in the document is abortion. Contrary to this study, the United Nations has promoted better maternal health through legal, or "safe", abortion. The outcome of the 2007 Women Deliver conference, which was backed by UNICEF, WHO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), was to declare that the best way to reduce maternal death was through family planning, including abortion. We now have even more evidence that this agenda is based upon unreliable, unsubstantiated data.

The new study uses the best statistical methods currently available and clearly demonstrates that it is not necessary to legalize abortion worldwide to bring about significant decreases in maternal mortality. We encourage States Members of the United Nations to continue to develop even better statistical information by

improving the identification of maternal mortality causality, especially induced abortion-related mortality, which is most often underreported or misreported.

The editor of *The Lancet* told the *New York Times* he had been pressured by "advocacy groups" to delay publication of the report until later in 2010, after United Nations meetings that discussed funding for maternal health had been held. Because of his courageous commitment to scholarly and scientific principles, we now have the evidence to pursue better policy.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Women in Europe for a Common Future, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34355 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

Women in Europe for a Common Future promotes the right to water for all and calls for standards that go beyond the existing standards, which will benefit women and girls in particular. We believe that in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals the number of population lacking access to safe and affordable water needs to be reduced to a minimum.

Specific problems arise from gender-related issues in relation to water. Women and men have distinct responsibilities in using and managing water and water systems. In many developing countries, and in some Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries, women and girls collect water for cooking, washing, cleaning, health and hygiene, raising small livestock and growing food. Rural men need water for irrigation and larger livestock, but women often care for the dairy cattle and young animals. Women also oversee family health. Women often spend long hours carrying water home. Because of their different gender roles, women and men have different stakes in water use, which need to be taken into consideration.

Article 14, paragraph (2) (h) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provides that State parties "shall ensure to [rural] women the right [...] to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to [...] sanitation [...] and water supply [...]". Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ensures access to clean drinking water for children within the framework of primary health care. This right is further promoted in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, specifically Goals 3, 4, 5 and 7. Goal 7, target 3, focuses exclusively on the issues of safe drinking water and sanitation.

In accordance with paragraph 2 of general comment No. 15 (2002) by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Women in Europe for a Common Future calls for a minimum of 20 litres per capita per day (sufficiency); safe and sustainable sanitation, as pit latrines and unsafe wastewater treatment are a main case of polluted water sources in the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian Region (safety); acceptable water in terms of colour and odour (acceptability); and house connections or at least street taps for every community. In some parts of the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian region, water sources are more than one kilometre from the house, which leads to unsafe water storage practices. Having to walk a long way to reach a water source is a great burden, especially in cold winters when paths are icy and muddy. Physically disabled women and young mothers, in particular, suffer from having to walk long distances (physical accessibility). Women in Europe for a Common Future also calls for the minimum amount of water (20 litres per capita per day) to be free of charge and an adequate price for every litre used beyond the minimum amount. Women in Europe for a Common Future also calls for transparency and information about price policies (affordability).

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Association for World Education, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34479 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

The institutions that provide the model for the programmes of Association for World Education are the folk high schools of Scandinavia. This vibrant network of hundreds of non-formal, residential, secondary and post-secondary schools all over Scandinavia first developed in the mid-nineteenth century in rural Denmark and spread soon after to the rest of Scandinavia. They were founded on the thinking of Danish theologian, philosopher and educator N. F. S. Grundtvig, who believed that the key to social and economic development and to the development of democracy lay in the "enlightenment of the people". This concept is one we can compare to the current notion of "consciousness-raising", with a strong social and philosophical base. The movement focused on literacy for rural farm populations; soon enough it became part of the broader, radical new notion of education for the general population which was spreading through Europe, namely education in the native language of the people (as opposed to elitist Latin).

And how can the enlightenment of the people help to promote gender equality when access to education itself is most limited? In many societies and contexts, the informal setting of adult education, learning circles and small gatherings is as good or better an environment for achieving this type of teaching for social change than the formal educational system (where there is one). Formal education systems can and must present the big picture, codify, convey statistics and measure outcomes, but the informal context of conversation among equals, of teachers sharing experiences with learners, even teachers and learners exchanging roles, can provide the basis for change to be enacted in society through relationships.

Historically, the great teachers shared the common belief that teaching was about relationships, and for that reason, the stronger the relationship in which teaching was grounded, the more effective the teaching.

While it is true that the fight for gender equality still needs to be won in most societies, developed and developing, and at many levels — within professions, in government, in business, in education — it is also true that meaningful social change on a broad scale lies in changed thinking. Equality clearly does not mean identical social roles, or identical roles from one society to another. Adult non-formal education programmes can lead the way.